

PhD candidate in the spotlight:

Laurens De Gauquier

DSH - Faculty ES, Marketing & Consumer Behavior



My name is Laurens De Gauquier and I have been working within the research group 'Marketing and Consumer Behavior' since finishing my master thesis in 2015. My research focuses on the impact of new technologies in off- and online retail environments on consumer's perceptions and attitudes, under the supervision of Prof. dr. Malaika Brengman and Prof. dr. Kim Willems.

My field of research is rapidly evolving due to the cycle of novel digital technologies each and every year. Because of this vastly changing environment, it is a challenge to keep up-to-date with our own different research projects. This fact keeps my work interesting and demands a strong focus from me on both actuality and new research projects. In particular, we are investigating the impact of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, which can facilitate the consumer in their buying process, both on- and offline. In the offline shopping environment, we recently started experimenting with humanoid service robots with the aim of entertaining and informing the shopper about the store's products and offerings.

Have there been times where your research wasn't really working out the way you expected it to be? How did you cope with this difficulty? Or: What kept you motivated to continue nevertheless.

We just recently got a paper published which was 2 years and a half in the making. Even more, this was the subject of my bachelor- and master thesis, which makes it a research project of more than 4 years. Despite the rather 'slow' start of my PhD, where I was still in the learning process, this publication is the first confirmation that my research is satisfactory. The support of both supervisors and fellow PhD students is a really important aspect in maintaining motivation to meet your goal.

Do you have a healthy work-life balance? If so, could you share the secret ingredient(s)?

Working as a PhD student makes it easy to work from anywhere and anytime. Especially due to the latter, it is easy to lose yourself too much in your work. Through my PhD, I learned to work with to-do lists ordered in a way to have the highest priority task pinned on the first place. In this way I learned to better manage my deadlines and eventually maintain a healthy work-life balance. For example, when something is not finished for the day, I would rather stay an hour longer in the office than taking the work home.

What was your main motivation to start your PhD? Has working on your PhD changed that initial point of view?

The reason to start my PhD stems from my interest in doing research on a topic you feel affinity with. To feel affinity with your research is key to successfully start and finish a certain research project. By getting more involved in the academic world, I really learned to focus on doing research on emerging topics to fill in certain research gaps. This way of working recently led to an interdisciplinary collaboration with Prof. dr. Bram Vanderborght associated to the Robotics & Multibody Mechanics Research Group at VUB. This interdisciplinary research approach has taught me to broaden my scope and to think out-of-the-box.